S. HRG. 101-1003

NOMINATION OF MARY SHANNON BRUNETTE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIRST CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

THE NOMINATION OF MARY SHANNON BRUNETTE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, VICE SHERRIE SANDY ROLLINS, RESIGNED

OCTOBER 19, 1990

Printed for the use of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

35-386 WASHINGTON : 1990

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402

S241-18.

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NOMINATION OF MARY SHANNON BRUNETTE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, VICE SHERRIE SANDY ROLLINS, RESIGNED

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1990

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS,
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
Washington, DC.

The committee met at 10 a.m. in room SD-538 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr. (chairman of the committee) Presiding.

Present: Senators Riegle, Garn, and D'Amato.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN RIEGLE

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning.

This morning the committee will consider the nomination of Ms. Mary Brunette to become Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs is responsible for advising the Secretary on matters relating to public information, public opinion, participation in public events, relationships with the news media, and the impact of policy decisions on the public.

Ms. Brunette has worked for the past year and a half as an Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communication.

Ms. Brunette has also served as an assistant to Secretary Kemp in various roles in 1982.

The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs serves as the gatekeeper to the flow of information between the Department, the news media, and the general public.

It is critical that the individual who holds this position foster cooperative and open relationships with the news media and those parties that assist HUD in carrying out its mission.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator D'Amato.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR D'AMATO

Senator D'AMATO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to introduce Mary Brunette to the Banking Committee as it considers her nomination as Assistant

Secretary for Public Affairs for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Ms. Brunette is a native of my home State of New York.

She received her B.A. from LeMoyne College, and then came to Washington in 1982 to begin her legislative career.

Ms. Brunette has worked with Secretary Kemp for a number of years, in a variety of positions.

She started as a legislative assistant when the Secretary was a Member of the House of Representatives, worked on the Kemp Presidential campaign in 1987–88, and most recently has spent the past 2 years at HUD as Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communication.

Mary Brunette has been an integral part of the HUD team that turned around the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The HUD team, led by Secretary Kemp, has brought innovative thinkers and a restored vitality to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

He has also promoted creative legislation encouraging homeownership and tenant empowerment.

I am sure that Ms. Brunette's long-standing working relationship with the Secretary and her previous experience at HUD will be great assets to the department of Public Affairs.

I fully endorse the nomination of Mary Brunette as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Brunette, we will recognize you now for any comments you wish to make, but before we do that would you please raise your right hand.

Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Ms. BRUNETTE. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF MARY S. BRUNETTE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY-DESIGNATE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. BRUNETTE. Chairman Riegle, Senator Garn, Senator D'Amato, and members of the committee.

It is a privilege for me to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I am honored by the confidence President Bush and Secretary Kemp have shown in me by selecting me for this post.

I will work to fulfill my responsibilities in a way that upholds the very highest standards of public service.

I have worked with Secretary Kemp for nearly 10 years, and have been a member of his team at HUD since January 1989.

During my time at HUD I have had the opportunity to develop a very deep appreciation for HUD's historic mission of advancing homeownership, affordable housing, and economic development around the Nation.

I know that the members of this committee are committed to these goals as well.

The pathbreaking housing legislation we have been working together to achieve over the past months is evidence of this commitment.

The Office of Public Affairs can and does play an important role in supporting our shared goals for housing and urban economic development.

The office is a source of information about HUD and its programs for the media, the Congress, and the public.

The right to such information is an essential part of our democracy.

As Assistant Secretary, I will join with public affairs officers throughout the Government in upholding the National Association of Government Communicator's Code of Ethics which states:

> We believe that truth is inviolable and sacred; that providing public information is an essential civil service, and that the public at large and each citizen therein has a right to equal, full, understandable and timely facts about their Government.

Mr. Chairman, I accompanied Secretary Kemp when he came before this committee as President Bush's nominee to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

At that time he pledged to work with you to achieve some ambitious objectives.

Those goals of expanding homeownership and affordable housing opportunities, creating jobs and economic development through enterprise zones, empowering the poor through resident management and homesteading; enforcing fair housing for all; helping end the tragedy of homelessness; and making public housing drug-free.

We believe that by working together a great deal of progress has been made.

If I am confirmed, I will dedicate myself and the entire Office of Public Affairs to helping provide the American people with the information they need to encourage their support for these priorities and to restore their confidence in HUD's programs and mission.

I look forward to working with the committee and I am grateful for your support and encouragement.

[The complete prepared statement of Mary S. Brunette and biographical sketch follow:]

STATEMENT OF MARY S. BRUNETTE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY-DESIGNATE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

OCTOBER 19, 1990

Chairman Riegle, Senator Garn, and members of the Committee. It is a privilege for me to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I am honored by the confidence President Bush and Secretary Kemp have shown in me by selecting me for this post. I will work to fulfill my responsibilities in a way that upholds the very highest standards of public service.

I have worked with Secretary Kemp for nearly ten years, and have been a member of his team at HUD since January 1989. During my time at HUD I have had the opportunity to develop a very deep appreciation for HUD's historic mission of advancing homeownership, affordable housing, and economic development around the nation. I know that the members of this Committee are committed to these goals as well. The pathbreaking housing legislation we have been working together to achieve over the past months is evidence of this commitment.

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I look forward to working with the Committee and I am grateful for your support and encouragement.

STATEMENT FOR COMPLETION BY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

Name: Brunette (LAST) Mary (FIRST) Shannon (OTHER)

Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Dept. of Housing and Urban Development

Date of nomination: September 19, 1990

Date of birth: 12 (DAY) September (MONTH) 1960 (YEAR) Place of birth: Rochester, NY

Marital status: Single Full name of spouse:

Name and ages of children:

Education:	Institution	Dates attended	Degrees received	Dates of degrees
	LeMoyne College	9/78 - 5/82	BA	May 1982

Honors and awards: List below all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, military medals, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement.

New York State Regents Scholarship

LeMoyne College Scholarship

Memberships: List below all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, business, scholarly, civic, charitable and other organizations.

Organization	Office held (if any)	Dates
None		

Employment record: List below all positions held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employment, location of work, and dates of inclusive employment.

See Attachment A

ATTACHMENT A

MARY BRUNETTE'S EMPLOYMENT RECORD
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: 094-54-3557

1/89 to Present

Position: Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communication
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th St. S.W.
Room 10226
Washington, DC 20410

1/89 to 1/89

Position: Consultant
The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

10/88 TO 1/89

Position: Legislative Director/Press Secretary
Congressman Jack Kemp
2252 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

5/88 to 10/88

Position: Press Secretary
Congressman Jim Courter
2422 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

6/87 to 4/88

Position: Deputy Communications Director
Jack Kemp for President
1901 N. Moore Street
Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22209

ATTACHMENT A
Page 2

MARY BRUNETTE'S EMPLOYMENT RECORD
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: 094-54-3557

8/82 to 5/87

Position: Legislative Assistant/Director
Congressman Jack Kemp
2252 Rayburn Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

6/82 to 7/82

Position: Staff Assistant
House Republican Conference
1618 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Government experience: List any experience in or direct association with Federal, State, or local governments, including any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions.

Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communication
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Jan. 1989 to Present

Various staff positions - U.S. House of Representatives
June 1982 to June 1987; May 1988 to January 1989

Published writings: List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials you have written.

None

Political affiliations and activities: List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees during the last 10 years.

Deputy Director of Communications
Jack Kemp for President, June 1987 to April 1988

Political contributions: Itemize all political contributions of $500 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee or similar entity during the last eight years and identify the specific amounts, dates, and names of the recipients.

None

Qualifications: State fully your qualifications to serve in the position to which you have been named.
(attach sheet)

Future employment relationships:

1. Indicate whether you will sever all connections with your present employer, business firm, association or organization if you are confirmed by the Senate.

No; my current employer is the Department of Housing and Urban Development

2. As far as can be foreseen, state whether you have any plans after completing government service to resume employment, affiliation or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association or organization.

None

3. Has anybody made you a commitment to a job after you leave government?

No

4. Do you expect to serve the full term for which you have been appointed?

Yes

Potential conflicts of interest:

1. Describe any financial arrangements or deferred compensation agreements or other continuing dealings with business associates, clients or customers who will be affected by policies which you will influence in the position to which you have been nominated.

None

2. List any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which might involve potential conflicts of interest with the position to which you have been nominated.

None

3. Describe any business relationship, dealing or financial transaction (other than tax-paying) which you have had during the last 10 years with the Federal Government, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that might in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest with the position to which you have been nominated.

None

4. List any lobbying activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat or modification of any legislation at the national level of government or affecting the administration and execution of national law or public policy.

None

5. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items.

N/A

Civil, criminal and investigatory actions:

1. Give the full details of any civil or criminal proceeding in which you were a defendant or any inquiry or investigation by a Federal, State, or local agency in which you were the subject of the inquiry or investigation.

None

2. Give the full details of any proceeding, inquiry or investigation by any professional association including any bar association in which you were the subject of the proceeding, inquiry or investigation.

None

MARY BRUNETTE
STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

The position for which President Bush has nominated me, Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Public Affairs, is the culmination of my experience to date in the fields of public policy and communications. If confirmed, I will work to effectively communicate the policies and programs of the Bush Administration as they relate to housing and community economic development to the public.

My position as Assistant to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Policy and Communication has given me the opportunity to help develop and implement the HUD Reform Act, as well as the Bush Administration's housing and anti-poverty policies and iniitiatives for HUD. I have also had responsibility for effectively communicating those policies and programs to the public, through speeches, the Secretary's public appearances, and other media outlets. In fulfilling these responsibilities, I have drawn on my experience in public policy and communications, which I gained through my employment in various staff positions with the United States House of Representatives and in the Jack Kemp for President campaign.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Could you review again your professional training, or your educational background prior to that time?

Ms. BRUNETTE. I received a B.A. in political science from LeMoyne College in 1982.

I worked from 1982 until 1987 for Congressman Kemp, when he was then a Member of the Congress representing Buffalo, NY.

From 1987 until 1988, I was deputy communications director of the Jack Kemp for President campaign.

Following that, I worked as a press secretary for Congressman Jim Courter, and then I joined Secretary Kemp back at HUD in January 1989 as the Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communications.

The CHAIRMAN. Now as you know, the House and the Senate recently completed a conference on the National Affordable Housing Act.

It is expected that this major housing bill will be passed by the Congress before the recess, and certainly we are striving for that goal.

I think it is fair to say that this compromise package is a major step toward meeting some of the most serious housing problems in the country.

I am wondering in particular about the new HOME program which emphasizes decision making at the State and local level, and represents an innovative new direction in Federal housing policy.

I am wondering what are your views of the new legislation, and how would you see the office that you would be heading up here having the chance to help in the implementation process, the understanding process of this once it becomes law?

Ms. BRUNETTE. Well, I can certainly support the passage of the National Affordable Housing Act, and will provide information to particular States and localities about the program's allocation of funds to housing, through tenant based assistance, through rehabilitation, as well as construction, where needed.

I believe that it would be very important, particularly for communities who are involved in the allocation of these resources, that they have information about the program and how it will work, and hopefully the funding will be available for the program. That information should be disseminated to every community.

The Office of Public Affairs, through its publications, through contacts with the media, and through other means, will make every effort to educate them all as to the importance of the programs that are being offered under the National Affordable Housing Act.

The CHAIRMAN. As Senator D'Amato said earlier, he used the word "empowerment" as a way of expressing a desire to want to try to get grassroots people into the act, able to understand, and be more able to take meaningful charge or a significant role in dealing with these problems.

I would hope that, as we go down the track with some of these new initiatives, that we would particularly concentrate on how we get the word to those people, not just to administrators, people who are obviously important and who have to carry out the program implementation, the program design and so forth, but I think it is

especially difficult and, at the same time, especially important that we get the word to people out there so that they have a way of having a better understanding of what is going on, having a say in it, and having a way to have more influence themselves directly.

Let me move to another area.

Very shortly after you began your current job as Secretary Kemp's Assistant to the Secretary for Policy and Communication, you found yourself faced with what I think can be described as a true public relations nightmare of the HUD scandal.

Over many months of congressional hearings and intense scrutiny by the media, the Nation has learned how, under the last administration, the agency was I think badly mismanaged in several areas, and scarce Federal resources intended to assist the poor were in many instances diverted off to people who had particularly good political connections.

Having lived through the fallout of the last administration's errors in the Department in those areas I have described, what insights have you gained into managing the agency's relationships with the Congress, and the press, and the public?

Ms. BRUNETTE. Well, I believe that the most important lesson as it relates to the Congress, the press, and the public, is that we have full information on every HUD program.

One of the HUD reforms, which this committee was very instrumental in passing, was HUD in sunshine.

All the decisions made by the Department are published in the Federal Register and become open to the public and leaders. Funding decisions and other sorts of policy and program decisions are made public to allow individuals to have the access to information that in the past only those who had connections sometimes were able to obtain.

So we believe that is a crucial part of the HUD reform, and that will be something that will be instrumental in this area of HUD reform.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator D'Amato.

Senator D'AMATO. Well, Mr. Chairman, I only have one question, a very broad one, and maybe it should not be asked, but what do you see as the biggest challenge that you will confront as the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at HUD?

What are the most important challenges, as you see it, that you will be confronting as Assistant Secretary for Public Policy?

Ms. BRUNETTE. Well, I think the most important challenge that the Office of Public Affairs will be facing is to provide information about the National Affordable Housing Act which we are looking forward to having very soon, because that will be a major restructuring of the way housing assistance is distributed in this country, and is something that the Secretary is very committed to, as well as this committee. We believe that educating both the media about the complexity of this program, which sometimes can be a very difficult undertaking, as well as providing the public with information about various programs will be an important challenge facing the Department in the years to come.

Senator D'AMATO. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

Again, I want to thank you for affording Mary the opportunity of having a hearing.

Again, I think she appreciates the logjam and bind we are all in with two or three different conferences we are being called to at the same time.

I am late now for one at the Appropriations Full Committee, and then a Defense Committee at H-140 conference.

I know that you have an equal number, and I am deeply appreciative that you are making yourself available here.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator D'Amato.

Let me also say one other thing in that area.

You have worked very hard on the housing issue, not just this year but over many years, and have given great leadership to it.

That is part of the Housing Conference Report that we hope to be able to have before the House and Senate in the next few days here to get it enacted.

I appreciate how strongly you feel about the nominee, and I also am appreciative of the length of time of your service and your commitment stretching over many years.

This is hard work, as we all know who are in it, and I think getting at it in a serious way and working at it over a long period of time I think is a measure of the seriousness and commitment and cumulating experience which is very valuable.

Let me just ask one other question, and that relates to the Freedom of Information Act.

As you all know, that is the principal means by which the news media and the general public get access to Federal documents and information.

The act, as I am sure you know, requires agencies to make information requested through FOIA requests available within 10 days after those requests have been filed.

We have been told that, due to a very large backlog of requests at HUD, that it often takes up to 2 months or maybe longer for HUD to release information requested through the FOIA process.

Can you tell us why these backlogs are occurring, the circumstances behind them, and what can you do in this job, if confirmed, that will expedite these requests?

Ms. BRUNETTE. Well, it is true that there have been some backlogs in responding to the Freedom of Information Act requests at HUD, particularly over the past 2 years.

We have seen a large volume of requests for data under the act in response to the HUD scandals which began in the middle of last year.

There are enormous demands on the individuals who are actually working to fulfill these requests that often involve boxes upon boxes of information which need to be copied or made available to reporters or individuals in response to their requests.

In many cases, we find that the information an individual is seeking no longer exists at HUD, or was taken by an individual who has since left the Department.

So those are some of the challenges we face.

We have made some progress in reducing the backlog over the past few months.

The Office of Public Affairs typically is working as much as it can to expedite that.

The actual responsibility for Freedom of Information Act requests belongs to the Executive Secretariat now, which is under the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

But the Office of Public Affairs, particularly on those requests from the news media, is working to expedite them as much as it possibly can.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I would like you to continue to press on that.

I am going to ask you to do one other thing, if I may. It is a little beyond the scope of the Q and A for the committee record here, but we must both recuse ourselves. So I am going to conclude here in just a moment.

Behind you in the room have gathered now some students.

I think it would be useful, as long as you are here, and if you are not under immediate time pressure, which you would be if I kept asking you questions for 15 minutes, if maybe you could just when we are finished just take a short period of time to let the students know here a little bit about yourself, what you are doing, why you are here today, and about this confirmation hearing, and a little bit about what you have found as a young person in public life and public service which you have found rewarding.

Ms. BRUNETTE. I would be happy to.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator D'Amato, with that I am satisfied this morning. I also intend to support the nomination, so we will conclude the hearing at this point.

The committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, the committee was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]

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